

2013 FEDERAL EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER

Category 3 - Outstanding Program Specialist

Adrianne M. Callahan

Environmental Protection Agency

FACTOR I - JOB COMPETENCE:

Outstanding Program Specialist nominee Adrianne Callahan is a recognized leader nationally as a dedicated, outstanding advocate for small businesses in securing contracting opportunities with the federal government and its large contractors. As the only Small Business Utilization Coordinator for EPA Region 5, Ms. Callahan created some remarkable initiatives to foster opportunities and stimulate involvement of small businesses in the EPA procurement process. Along the way, the nominee recorded a number of “firsts” in the small business development field.

One of these original projects was the nominee’s contributions to the success of an EPA event under the White House Initiative to identify and reach historically underrepresented social-economic small businesses known as “HUBZone” businesses. Ms. Callahan became the first EPA regional small business coordinator to organize a National HUBZone small business summit outside Washington, D.C. The national EPA Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) selected Region 5 Chicago as co-host for its first summit event outside the Beltway because of Ms. Callahan’s exceptional expertise and leadership and her professional small business network.

The nominee proved worthy of OSBP’s trust. Over a period of several months, in partnership with the EPA OSBP and the event partner, the HUBZone Council, Ms. Callahan provided critical insights so the team could develop a conference that would strategically link qualified small businesses with certifications in the underrepresented social-economic categories. She demonstrated exceptional ability in briefing senior executives to encourage their engagement in the summit and in working with managers to secure key organizational support with staff and resources. In its communication with EPA Region 5, the EPA OSBP Director described Ms. Callahan as “...the eyes, ears, hands and feet of OSBP in making this conference an overwhelming success.” The senior EPA manager continued by describing her contributions as “exceptional in dealing with every curveball,” and OSBP acknowledged her contributions as “highly substantial and far-reaching.”

In challenging economic times, Ms. Callahan’s small business advocacy only grows stronger. In this past year, she became the first EPA Small Business Specialist to utilize social media tools by participating in an informational podcast for use on a small business resource website. She was also the first EPA small business expert to conduct an informational webinar for the Illinois Small Business Administration. Typical of Ms. Callahan’s initiative and leadership in EPA nationally, she shared details of her approach and methods for using podcasts and webinars with senior leadership in OSBP and her regional counterparts, all in a dedicated effort to help EPA meet its national small business goals.

These firsts are beyond the nominee’s normal level of extraordinary outreach activities and events she pursues and undertakes on a daily and weekly basis to further EPA’s small business goals. She conducts numerous education sessions on a continuing basis with small business owners and actively participates in small business conferences and events, as an individual presenter and on presentation panels. Ms. Callahan is also a highly respected member of the Federal Agency Small Business Interagency Procurement Forum and recently accepted the role

of chair for one of the committees. Ms. Callahan frequently receives letters of appreciation from small business owners, her counterparts in state and local government, not-for-profit companies, and EPA managers and peers.

Just recently, for example, because of the initiatives facilitated by the nominee, EPA's Great Lakes National Program office reported an increase in the use of a small contractor. The small business directly attributed their success to the knowledge obtained from Ms. Callahan's outreach and assistance efforts. EPA Region 5 continuously meets and exceeds the agency's annual goal, which in FY 2012 meant awarding at least 42 percent of its contract dollars to small businesses. Thanks to Ms. Callahan and her exceptional leadership and work with the Region 5 acquisition and management teams, EPA Region 5 has often been the Agency leader over the years in exceeding the 3 percent goal for contracts awarded to the category of Service Disabled Veteran-Owned small businesses. On average, Region 5 has consistently exceeded that goal for Service Disabled Veteran-Owned companies by more than 20 percent. In FY 2012, 62 percent of the EPA Region 5's total contract dollars were awarded to small businesses, and of that total, 28 percent were awarded to Service Disabled Veteran-Owned businesses and 29 percent to another key category – Small Disadvantaged businesses.

Additionally, more than 50 percent of U.S. EPA's entire Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business contract dollars were awarded by Region 5 alone. This is quite an achievement for the lone small business specialist, who in direct support of the acquisition and management teams in the Chicago office, is one of the agency's strongest advocates for the inclusion of small businesses in our contracting process. Although she could be, Ms. Callahan isn't satisfied with the results in a couple of small business categories. Region 5 lags behind other regions in awarding contracts to underrepresented social-economic small businesses and woman-owned firms. That's one of the reasons the nominee's exceptional skill and network were tapped to ensure the success of the first HUBZone Summit, which will gave underrepresented businesses a better understanding on how to navigate EPA's contracting processes.

The Region greatly benefits from Ms. Callahan's outstanding leadership and is fortunate to have such talent on the regional team. Ms. Callahan received an EPA Sustained Superior Accomplishment Award in FY 2011 and FY 2012, with the FY 2012 award also being recommended and approved by the Director of EPA's Office of Small Business Programs in EPA Headquarters.

FACTOR II – IMPACT:

More than 200 small businesses, 50 federal employees, 20 federal agencies and 30 large or prime federal government and private contractors participated in Chicago's HUBZone Summit making it a resounding success. Throughout the planning process and in conducting the conference, Ms. Callahan rose to every challenge as she worked with the national team to make sure the Summit achieved its goals. Most notably, EPA's OSBP Director acknowledged Ms. Callahan's contributions as, "highly substantial and far-reaching" and further noted, "this event was pivotal in overcoming the impediment to identifying HUBZone (historically underutilized small businesses) not just for EPA, but for several agencies across the federal government." In addition, since EPA has historically fallen short of its goal for utilizing HUBZone businesses, the nominee's expertise and leadership is all the more noteworthy and deserving of recognition. From every aspect of planning to execution, Ms. Callahan repeatedly managed and resolved a

wide range of difficult issues and demanding logistics. Significantly, the Summit was free for participants and thanks to the nominee's outstanding planning operated with minimal costs, critically important during these austere economic times. It was held in GSA conference space; the National HUBZone Council handled registration at no cost; and EPA Region 5 provided local staff and resources. Every effort was also made to have a "green" conference by providing materials in electronic format before and after the Summit.

The participating businesses and federal agencies provided much positive feedback on the conference, noting the importance of making these connections for the success of their small businesses and in order to meet federal goals for small business utilization. All of this is testimony to Ms. Callahan's role and success in uniting and facilitating teams across organizational lines to achieve outstanding results. In all of her outreach activities this past year, the feedback from small businesses and her peers consistently demonstrates she fulfills her responsibilities beyond what would normally be expected of her in this position. Despite a heavy workload spent planning this Summit, Ms. Callahan continued to excel in all aspects of her role as the Region 5 Small Business Utilization Coordinator.

FACTOR III - SPECIAL EFFORTS: (Personal Achievement, significant special effort, sacrifice)

Throughout this period, Ms. Callahan also completed the course requirements and obtained her Masters of Business Administration degree. Within EPA, she completed the mid-level leadership development program and actively participated in a related leadership group. As a lifetime member of Federally Employed Women, she was awarded the annual scholarship and is now on the group's National Board of Directors as the Manager of the Great Lakes Region. She is also active in other organizations, such as Blacks in Government where she serves as a chapter officer.

In 2012, Ms. Callahan was the recipient of the Egretta Award from the African American Women's Business organization that recognized her dedication and success in her work. The nominee takes on active roles in her volunteer efforts because she believes it connects her personal values to the constituent group the organization serves. In this way, she explains, she gains perspective on how she can best contribute to her community, help the disadvantaged and children at risk, and empower women. Ms. Callahan will tell you, though, that her most valued titles are wife, mother and living organ donor. She donated a kidney a few years ago to save the life of a dear friend, a fellow federal government employee. Last, but not least, she is the proud mother of one girl and five boys, including identical twin boys.

For her recognized leadership in forming strong bonds between the federal government and small business, Adrienne Callahan richly deserves FEOY's Outstanding Program Specialist Employee Award.